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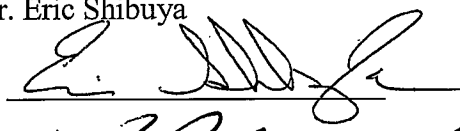
China's Pursuit of a Blue-Water Navy

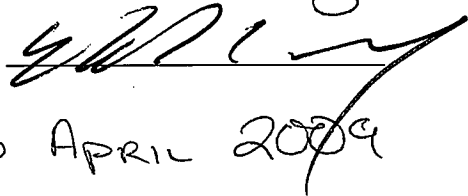
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DEGREE OF MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

AUTHOR: CDR(s) William D.J. Pharis, USN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: China's Pursuit of a Blue-Water Navy

Author: Commander (Select) William D.J. Pharis, US Navy

Thesis: China's efforts to acquire a blue water naval force are a critical part of China's focus on modernizing its military force for the future.

Discussion: The necessity for modernization and increasing Chinese sea power is influenced by Chinese desire to be seen as a global superpower on par with the United States, to counter US influence and regain preeminence within maritime Asia, reunification with Taiwan, and finally to protect their rapidly growing economy by securing critical trade and energy sea routes. Not only will China use this blue water force for power projection and protecting its maritime interests, but China will look to the Pacific as a new Great Wall to enhance the overall security of China. By utilizing this blue water naval capability the Chinese will be able to extend their defense of the Chinese mainland.

Conclusion: China's naval development and modernization will continue rapidly with the full support of the Chinese government. This development is not only a response to United States' power and influence in maritime Asia, but is a natural manifestation of development in line with Mahan's theories on sea power. China's current naval development is a reflection of their history and mirrors previous times of significant naval development. This naval force will be a hybrid of the previously established guerre de course Chinese Navy and a more traditional blue-water force that will seek to maximize enemy force attrition, deny access to critical areas, and protect vital shipping and sea lines of communication.

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INTRODUCTION

China's efforts to acquire a blue water naval force are a critical part of China's focus on modernizing its military force for the future. China is currently in the process of modernizing its naval forces both doctrinally and by acquiring both platforms and weapon systems required to become a credible "blue-water" capable force. In a series of 2006 press reports¹, Chinese president Hu Jintao declared "We should strive to build a powerful navy that adapts to the needs of our military's historical mission in this new century and at this new stage" and is prepared "at any time" for military struggle.² "In the process of protecting the nation's authority and security and maintaining our maritime rights, Hu emphasized, "the navy's role is very important."³ Hu added that China's "navy force should be strengthened and modernized"⁴ and should continue moving toward "blue-water' capabilities".⁵

The term "blue-water" navy is commonly used to describe a maritime force capable of operating in deep waters of the open ocean. Inherent in this term is the ability for this force to exercise sea control at long ranges. Sea power will be defined, for the purposes of this paper, as the following: the capability to wage war on, over, under, and above the seas; the ability to conduct sea-borne commerce; the industrial base that can support both of these activities; and the technological facilities to extract useful materials from the sea itself.⁶ Thus, sea power is understood as comprising both a naval element as well as a commercial element.⁷ This is critical, in that as a nation's mercantile power expands its naval power demands will also increase. A nation that does not strike this balance leaves itself vulnerable. China has recognized this vulnerability and is making a concerted effort to address it. Immediately after World War II, traditional sea power

scholars would have generally defined this naval blue-water capability as requiring possession of carrier battle groups. However, in the age of cruise missiles, nuclear Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles, satellite reconnaissance and communication, as well as advanced Command and Control systems this is not necessarily the case. China does not appear to be aggressively pursuing carrier battle groups yet is developing a Navy that would, for all intents and purposes, be considered a blue-water navy.⁸ The navy that China is in the process of developing is uniquely Chinese. Like modern China itself it is a blend of East and West, Marxism and Capitalism, and is specifically tailored, in coordination with the rest of the Chinese military, to counter US military strengths and exploit perceived weaknesses. Andrew S. Erickson makes the point that the Chinese have their own universal logic of sea power that is both Mahanian and Marxist, and is constrained less by ideology than by capability.⁹ More importantly, Erickson and other naval analysts point out, "A concerted effort to improve these capabilities is clearly underway and enjoys the sustained support of China's leadership."¹⁰ Both China's political and military establishments recognize the value of a modern navy and will continue efforts to acquire a blue-water naval force as a critical part of modernizing its military force for the future.

Research Framework

This paper argues that China will continue its efforts to acquire a blue water naval force as a critical part of modernizing its military force for the future. A series of questions and analysis assessments are developed within the paper. These questions are:

1. Why do nations go to sea?
2. How does China's desire to be a superpower influence its pursuit of a blue water naval force?
3. What is the relationship between US naval presence in maritime Asia, China's desire for reunification with Taiwan and China's efforts to acquire a blue water navy?
4. How can China protect vital sea lines of communication and maintain its critical trade routes and resources?
5. How will China adapt its current naval strategy to its goal of a blue-water capable navy?
6. How can the United States use China's emerging blue water capability as an opportunity for political engagement?

WHY NATIONS GO TO SEA

Nations put to sea for a variety of reasons. A nation's pursuit of maritime power can be analyzed by viewing its economics, history and security requirements.¹¹ In most cases, a nation begins its ocean-going efforts as a way to acquire food and other natural resources. Subsequently, these fishermen may become organized into fleets with established areas of resource gathering. Trade routes and coastal traders may soon follow and the potential for inter-nation trading manifests itself. As a nation expands its foreign

contacts and interests, the need to protect these interests emerges. Thus, the need for a naval force presents itself and the type of force will depend on the needs of the nation. These naval forces typically manifest themselves along two lines of development. The first is a purely a coastal defense force. This force generally can project power no further than its recognized maritime boundary. Furthermore, it may possess only those capabilities required for protection of the coast line, coastal traders and fishermen, regulation of coastal traffic, and maritime law enforcement. As a nation's power expands, it may subsequently seek to develop a navy capable of expanding its global reach. This naval force must possess the capability to conduct open ocean naval operations outside the influence of the nation's borders. This will manifest itself in the ability to project naval power far beyond the nation's coast line. Furthermore, this force will enable protection of the nation's overseas interests. Therefore, the nation is now able to protect critical maritime trade routes and shipping critical to the nation's economic growth and development. According to Mahan, a great maritime power's development will be influenced by six factors affecting its rise to greatness, "The principal conditions affecting the sea power of nations may be enumerated as follows: I. Geographical Position. II. Physical Conformation, including, as connected therewith, natural productions and climate. III. Extent of Territory. IV. Number of Population. V. Character of the People. VI. Character of the Government, including therein the national institutions."¹² Viewed through this lens, China has the potential to develop into the next great maritime power. China's geographic position, significant land borders that require protection, would be viewed unfavorably by Mahan.¹³ However, its massive army and difficult terrain provide China a deep sense of security that mitigates this factor. This

sense of security has enabled the Chinese to devote the resources necessary to develop its maritime power. Furthermore, China possesses significant coast lines, deep water harbors, and viable ports that match favorably with Mahan's requirements with respect to physical conformation and extent of territory.¹⁴ These geographic features play vital roles in China's ability to support both its expanding commercial maritime base and the further development of its navy. Finally, China's population¹⁵, character of its people¹⁶, and government¹⁷ also meet the Mahanian requirements for sea power development; that is China has the population, the industrial and commercial capacity, as well as the governmental direction and structure to develop as a great sea power. Therefore, China's current efforts within the maritime domain parallel this dynamic and reaffirm China's strategy of developing a "blue-water" naval force.

CHINA'S DRIVE TO BE A SUPERPOWER

China strongly desires to be recognized as the equal to the United States within the global community. China's grand strategy is keyed to the attainment of three interrelated objectives: first and foremost, the preservation of domestic order and well-being in the face of different forms of social strife; second, the defense against external threats to national sovereignty and territory; and third, the attainment and maintenance of geo-political influence as a major, and perhaps primary, state.¹⁸ Throughout history those nations that have possessed a prodigious amount of sea power have, in turn, been considered the global or the major powers of their time. Nations such as Britain, France, the Netherlands and Japan have all had significant impact on the world through sea power. Sea power is a combination of maritime trading capability and the ability to not

only to protect this trade, but to use naval power as a key part of national power. It is that ability to power project both in a defensive role, as well as in the conduct of war, that drives nations to develop these capabilities. This goal is of such import that the Chinese government conducted a study entitled *The Rise of Great Powers* which examines why nine nations became great powers.¹⁹ The nine nations studied were Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, and the United States. The study suggests that national power stems from economic development, which is fueled by foreign trade and in turn can be furthered by a strong navy.²⁰ This relationship is further emphasized by Senior Captain Liu Yijian of the Peoples Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) who writes, "Possession of a big and powerful naval force is of great strategic importance in defending national security, promoting a nation's economic development, and maintaining a nation's international standing".²¹ Another important insight comes from Senior Naval Captain Xu Qi whose view is that China's Navy:

Is a "vehicle for asserting Chinese sovereignty abroad." Further stating that "Naval vessels are symbols of state power and authority which can act as 'mobile territory' and freely navigate the high seas of the world... Their mission is not limited to offshore defense." Continuing he states that, "For all these reasons, China's navy must unceasingly move towards the posture of a 'blue-water navy' and expand the scope of maritime strategic defense."²²

Thus, the Chinese political and military understand that a modern, open ocean Navy is a requirement to be considered a global power on par with the US. "Nations that seek to compete at the highest international political and military levels must now seek expertise in all technological areas."²³

From the perspective of Admiral F.N. Gromov, Commander of the Russian Navy, "The development of modern navies is unthinkable without the application of the latest technology in shipbuilding, the creation of shipboard power and radio-electronic

systems, informatics, and also missile-artillery and min-torpedo armaments."²⁴ Adm.

Gromov's words are important as Russian is the only post-World War II country, except for China, that has attempted to create a Navy as a direct competitor with the United States. Viewing China through Mahan's six elements of sea power "geographical position, physical conformation, extent of territory, number of population, national character, and character of government", it is apparent that China possesses all the requirements to become a great maritime power. China's current grand strategy can be defined as one that is of a "calculative nature".²⁵ This strategy, in which China actively avoids international confrontations and focuses on building their economy, will drive the necessity for a modern, capable Navy. According to Swaine and Tellis:

The notion of calculative strategy is defined in substantive terms as a pragmatic approach that emphasizes the primacy of internal economic growth and stability, the nurturing of amicable international relations, the relative restraint in the use of force combined with increasing efforts to create a more modern military, and the continued search for asymmetric gains internationally. The reasons for this new strategy are ultimately rooted in the fact that China today requires high levels of undistracted growth in economic and technological terms, and hence significant geopolitical quiescence, to both ensure domestic order and well-being to effectively protect its security interests along the periphery and beyond.²⁶

Accepting this strategy, it becomes apparent that the economic needs driving Chinese development will also drive naval modernization and capability. Thomas M. Kane summarizes the concept well by stating, "Sea power is not the only factor which will determine whether the People's Republic of China (PRC) realizes its potential to become a global power, but it ranks alongside economic development and political stability as one of the most critical".²⁷

US NAVAL PRESENCE AND CHINA

Currently, the United States is indisputably the dominant naval force within maritime Asia. These naval forces, in cooperation with other US military assets and foreign nation support, provide the ability to negate Chinese ambitions in what the Chinese consider their historical maritime domain. Among these ambitions would be the resolution of issues regarding exclusive economic zones and ownership of potentially rich oil and gas deposits, including some 7 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and up to 100 billion barrels of oil in the East China Sea, which has contributed to friction with Japan.²⁸ Additionally, in the South China Sea, China claims exclusive sovereignty over the Spratly and Paracel island groups – claims disputed by Brunei, the Philippines, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Vietnam.²⁹ It is the US naval presence and Chinese maritime trade vulnerability that precludes the Chinese from resolving through force these international maritime disputes.

Taiwan

In March 2005, the 10th National People's Congress passed the Anti-Secession Law. This law unequivocally stated China's policy on Taiwan and reiterated that China keeps open the option of force for reunification. Article 8 of the law reads:

In the event that the "Taiwan independence" secessionist forces should act under any name or by any means to cause the fact of Taiwan's secession from China, or that major incidents entailing Taiwan's secession from China should occur, or that possibilities for a peaceful reunification should be completely exhausted, the state shall employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures to protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The State Council and the Central Military Commission shall decide on and execute the non-peaceful means and other necessary measures as provided for in the preceding paragraph and shall promptly report to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress."³⁰

Despite Article 3 of the Anti-Secession law which reads that “The Taiwan question is one that is left over from China's civil war of the late 1940s”, and that “Solving the Taiwan question and achieving national reunification is China's internal affair, which subjects to no interference by any outside forces”³¹ China has no misconception concerning the potential for conflict with the US over Taiwan, yet both China and the United States likely remain ambiguous on Taiwan by design. Collective ambiguity, by both nations, forestalls the potential for hostilities allowing the issue to be resolved through diplomatic negotiations. While China has been able to block US recognition of Taiwan as well United Nation membership, it has been unwilling or unable to achieve unification through military force. However, as stated in a recent Congressional report. “China's near-term focus on preparing for contingencies in the Taiwan Strait, including the possibility of U.S. intervention, is an important driver of its modernization.”³² Therefore, modernization and acquisition programs of blue-water naval capabilities must continue. Thus, should China deem force necessary for reunification, it will possess a naval force capable of supporting that option.

CHINESE NAVAL HISTORY

According to the Office of Naval Intelligence's most recent report on China the PLAN considers its founding day as 23 April 1949, when the East China Military Region Navy was created. In January 1950, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee's Military Commission, commonly known as the Central Military Commission (CMC), appointed an Army general, Xiao Jinguang, as the first PLAN commander.³³ On 14 April 1950, PLAN Headquarters was officially established in

Beijing.³⁴ Additionally, the current PLAN has five branches: submarine, surface forces, naval aviation, coastal defense, and a marine corps. In order to support training and development the Chinese Navy has established 10 subordinate academies and schools, as well as various research institutes, specialized support forces, and a political, logistics, and maintenance structure.³⁵ Finally, the naval forces are organized into three specific fleets with concurrent operational responsibilities: North Sea Fleet, East Sea Fleet, and South Sea Fleet.³⁶

Missions and Campaigns of the PLAN

In order to understand the Chinese efforts to acquire a blue water force the missions of the Chinese Navy must be delineated. The PLAN's primary missions are to guard against enemy invasion from the sea, defend the state's sovereignty over its territorial waters, and finally safeguard the state's maritime rights and interests.³⁷ These mission sets then define the potential PLAN campaign sets for potential naval conflict.

The PLA has identified 22 types of campaigns it could conduct during a conflict. Of these, the PLAN has six key types of campaigns that it may be called upon to engage in, either as part of a larger joint campaign or as a single service affair. They include:

- Sea Blockade Campaign: A campaign aimed at blocking or reducing the sea links between the enemy and the rest of the world.
- Anti-Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) Campaign: A campaign to damage and paralyze enemy sea lines of communication.
- Sea-to-Land Attack Campaign: A campaign aimed at "attacking enemy naval bases, ports, and other important land based targets." These campaigns can

involve either the use of conventional weapons or sea-based nuclear weapons.

- Antiship Campaign: A campaign to destroy or damage large surface warships.

It is “the most typical of all naval campaigns.”

- Sea Transportation Protection Campaign: A Navy campaign to defend the safety of sea transportation and sea lines of communication.

- Naval Base Defense Campaign: A campaign to resist large-scale enemy attack, blockade, or occupation of friendly naval bases. This includes defense against a variety of attacks, including attacks with submarines, surface warships, water mines, air and land attacks, and attacks with nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons.³⁸

Taking into account these potential missions and campaigns: it is clear that China’s current naval force structure is inadequate to meet all of these mission criteria. For example, it is very unlikely that China’s current naval force structure, could achieve success in its Sea Transportation Protection Campaign. Furthermore, current force structure will continue to limit China’s ability to realistically achieve any campaign success, beyond Taiwan, without significant naval acquisitions. Therefore, China will continue its modernization programs, in line, to support the delineated campaigns.

PLAN Naval Acquisitions and Force Modernization

China’s naval force modernization and acquisitions program is two-fold. China continues to fund a very advanced research and development program for indigenous production while at the same time purchasing weapon systems and platforms from Russia to fill critical gaps. According to the latest Annual Congressional Report:

The PLA is acquiring large numbers of highly accurate cruise missiles, such as the domestically produced ground-launched DH-10 land attack cruise missile (LACM); the Russian SS-N-22/SUNBURN supersonic anti-ship cruise missile (ASCM) outfitted on China's two SOVREMENNY and two SOVREMENNY II-class guided missile destroyers (DDG), also acquired from Russia; and, the SS-N-27B/SIZZLER supersonic ASCM, outfitted on the last eight of twelve total Russian-built KILO-class diesel electric submarines China has acquired. Furthermore, China is developing an anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) based on a variant of the CSS-5 medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM) as a component of its anti-access strategy. The missile has a range in excess of 1,500 km and, when incorporated into a sophisticated command and control system, is a key component of China's anti-access strategy to provide the PLA the capability to attack ships at sea, including aircraft carriers, from great distances."³⁹

Despite Yoshihara and Holmes assertions that China is not aggressively pursuing aircraft carrier battle groups, China does maintain an active aircraft carrier research and design program and the PRC shipbuilding industry could likely begin construction by the end of this decade.⁴⁰ Additional acquisition and force modernization efforts include:

- The PLA Navy is improving its over-the-horizon (OTH) targeting capability with Sky Wave and Surface Wave OTH radars, and is developing missiles with improved range and accuracy.
- Two new SHANG-class (Type 093) nuclear powered attack submarines (SSN) and one JIN-class (Type 094) SSBN may soon enter service alongside four older HAN-class SSNs and China's single XIA-class SSBN.
- China has an estimated ten SONG-class (Type 039) diesel-electric attack submarines (SS) in its inventory. The SONG-class SS is designed to carry the YJ-82 (CSS-N-8) ASCM. The YUAN class SS is now assessed to be in full production and will be ready for service by 2010.

- The PLA Navy has received seven new domestically produced surface combatants in the past two years, including two LUYANG II-class (Type 052C) DDGs fitted with the indigenous HHQ-9 long-range surface-to-air missile (SAM); two LUZHOU-class (Type 051C) DDGs equipped with the Russian SA-N-20 long-range SAM, and three JIANGKAI II-class (Type 054A) guided missile frigates (FFG) to be fitted with the medium-range HHQ-16 vertically launch naval SAM currently under development. These ships reflect leadership's priority on advanced anti-air warfare capabilities for China's naval forces, which has historically been a weakness of the fleet.

- China is continuing construction of its new Type 022 catamaran-style missile patrol craft, which likely will be armed with Anti-ship Cruise Missiles.⁴¹

An assessment of China's acquisition and force modernization efforts reveals that China is tailoring a hybrid naval force capable of general blue-water operations, and specifically tailored to challenge the United States for supremacy in maritime Asia.

Impact of History and Culture on Chinese Naval Development

China's history and economy has driven the rise and fall of the various forms of the Chinese Navy. Accordingly, when China has entered periods of significant maritime trade they, in turn, have maintained effective naval forces.⁴² China has now, once again, entered a period in which they must develop and maintain an effective Navy.

China possesses a significant history and tradition of sea power. Between 800 and 400 BC, an era known as the Spring and Autumn Period, China experienced a series of transformations that impacted Chinese agriculture, metallurgy, economic development,

culture, intellectual thought, and political and military development.⁴³ These changes enabled surpluses of food and trade goods which in turn drove Chinese merchants to seek additional trading partners. Early sea trade partners included peoples from Korea, Manchuria, and Siberia.⁴⁴ At the same time the incorporation of the Ch'u portion of China brought both ports and sea faring peoples into China.⁴⁵ The increase in trade, acquisition of ports, and the intellectual and cultural transformations provided conditions in which sea power development became a necessity.⁴⁶ Additionally, Han Dynasty rulers secured their trade routes, not because they were profitable, but because they were vital to their policy of co-opting so-called 'barbarian' leaders with gifts.⁴⁷ Many of these factors parallel the conditions and development that drives today's Chinese naval development. China's manufacturing capability provides goods that China trades around the world, predominately by sea while the intellectual and cultural transformation of the Chinese political and military authority drives the development of expanded naval capabilities. Concurrently, this industry requires vast amounts of resources, especially petroleum that China must also bring in via sea. This in turn necessitates the need for both a large merchant fleet, but also a naval force capable of protecting those sea routes upon which those vessels travel.

Furthermore, China has only previously achieved the combination of robust trade and naval strength which constitute sea power under rulers who harnessed commerce to extend the influence of their empire.⁴⁸ It can be posited that the current Chinese government is following a very similar strategy in the use and development of sea power. It is readily apparent that the current Chinese government views their economy and further economic development as a means to extend their empire.

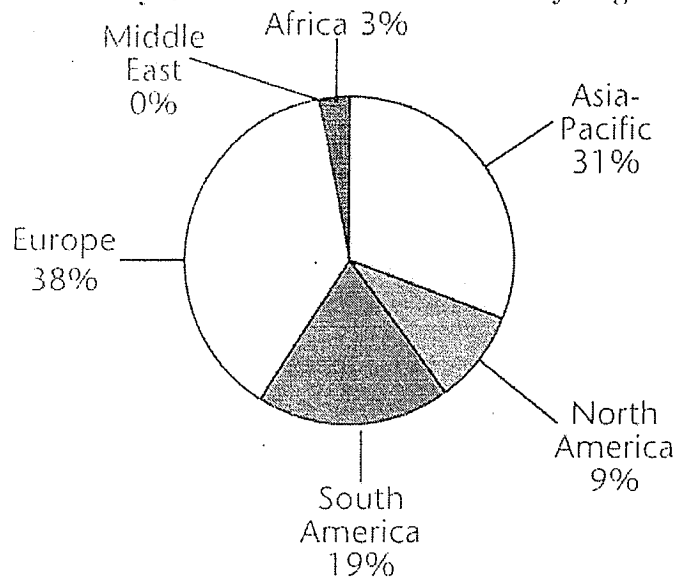
Historically, China understands the ramifications of having a weak navy and the vulnerability that entails. The Opium War of 1839 demonstrated to the Chinese, the value of a western style Navy. In one skirmish, the British vessel HMS Volage defeated a squadron of 29 Chinese warships.⁴⁹ This episode of Chinese history clearly demonstrated to the Chinese that a numerically superior force can be defeated by a smaller but technologically superior foe. The value of a modern, western style navy was further emphasized by Lin Tse-hsu, governor of Canton, who stated that if "China had used but one-tenth of its customs revenue from foreign trade to build a Western-style navy, it would not have suffered such embarrassment."⁵⁰

Recent Office of Naval Intelligence reporting provides insight into the increased modern Chinese use of their Navy for international relations:

China sent only 2 task groups abroad to 4 countries and hosted 23 port calls from 14 countries during the 1980s. During the 1990s, the PLAN dispatched 10 task groups for port calls to 20 countries and hosted 30 port calls from 17 countries. Since January 2000, the PLAN has sent 13 task forces on 37 country visits and hosted about 25 foreign naval ship visits. The PLAN has conducted all of its ship visits using 7 different destroyers, 7 frigates, 2 training ships, and 6 replenishment ships. As the program has progressed, the PLAN has used its port calls as an opportunity to show off its newest ships as well as to train its crews in open-ocean operations.⁵¹

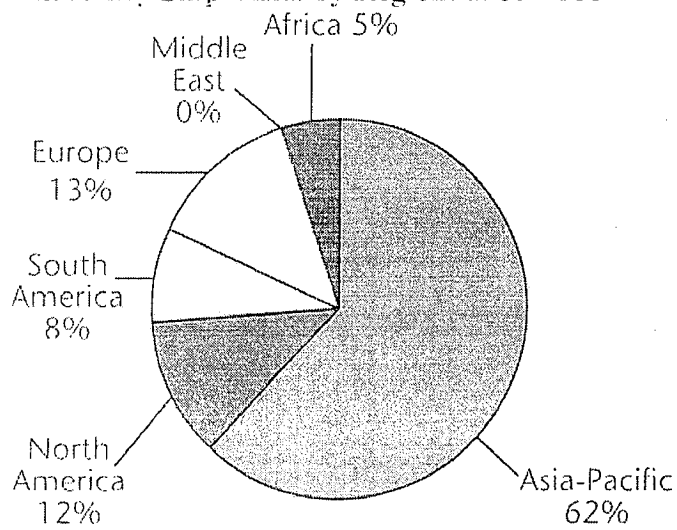
The following graphics illustrate Chinese focus of effort:

Figure 1
PLA Navy Commander Visits Abroad by Region: 1982-2006



Source: Office of Naval Intelligence, China's Navy 2007

Figure 2
PLA Navy Ship Visits by Region: 1985-2006



Source: Office of Naval Intelligence, China's Navy 2007

China's ability to show the flag in regions of the world outside the Asian-Pacific rim is crucial in their ability to demonstrate the capability to protect vital overseas interests. Recent press reporting of China dispatching three naval vessels to conduct counter-piracy operations in vicinity of Somalia illustrate that China believes that it can achieve some measure of success in showing the flag.⁵² China's deployment of these naval forces reinforces China's growing ability and desire to protect its sea lines of communications. Furthermore, China continues to emphasize its port visits and naval exchange programs every year.

The Maritime Great Wall

China has long recognized that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to defeat the US in a naval conflict as forces stand today. It follows that the Chinese view the water that surrounds the approaches to China's large coasts as a new "Great Wall" providing China's naval forces a domain in which to delay and defend the mainland by trading space for time and reducing through attrition any potential adversary attempting to conduct operations within the Chinese maritime domain. This use of the maritime domain as another Great Wall is not a new concept and has been a part of Chinese defense strategy a number of times throughout their history. Whether it was the Yangtze, the East or South China Sea, or today the Pacific, China has viewed these bodies of water as a Great Wall and the ships that sail upon them as watchtowers.⁵³ Prior to the significant efforts at modernization, China's navy had been described as a "naval guerilla" force.⁵⁴ China understands that it doesn't have to defeat the US militarily, but rather inflict casualties and damage that would be politically unacceptable to the leaders

and people of the United States.⁵⁵ Therefore, in conjunction with the strategic view of the Pacific as a new Great Wall: the Chinese will continue to develop a fleet capable of conventional guerre de course warfare while at the same time pursuing fleet capabilities on par with the size and scope of the United States. In entirety, the recent acquisitions of naval platforms such as the Kilo class submarine and development or additional acquisition of mines, torpedoes and anti-ship missiles illustrates this Chinese approach.⁵⁶ This acquisition cycle and understanding of Chinese naval thought will likely provide insight into how they will employ their modern naval capabilities.

CONCLUSION

China now finds itself not only capable of building a blue water navy, but that it faces the requirement to do so in pursuit of its national interests. This development of Chinese naval power is not just a reaction to US presence and power, but is natural in the development of China as a great power. The fact that the Chinese will develop a significant blue water capability cannot be changed. Perhaps most critical will be how the US chooses to view this development of power. Is it to be viewed as a challenge or as an opportunity for engagement? The United States faces a significant quandary in balancing the opportunity for engagement with regional fear of a China with regional hegemonic aspirations. It is important for the US not to overestimate the Chinese naval threat, but, at the same time, history is full of examples of how dangerous it can be to underestimate an emerging power.⁵⁷

The United States has a significant amount of experience in military to military engagement that it may draw upon from its recent past. The United States Navy routinely

conducts exercises and relationship building as part of its normal operations in various geographic theaters. An effort to encourage Chinese observation and participation in these types of operations should be emphasized. Using a crawl, walk, run model the United States and China can establish a level of cooperation that mirrors the success with both Russia and Partnership for Peace countries via the annual Baltic Operations (BALTOPS) exercise.⁵⁸ The crawl phase includes search and rescue exercises, basic ship handling, and basic multi-ship operations that have the potential to build a military relationship for further expansion. The walk phase could include joint counter-piracy operations in the Pacific similar to those being conducted by NATO and Coalition navies off the Horn of Africa. Finally, the run phase would include an annual, large scale naval exercise using the current BALTOPS template that included not only China but other Asian-Pacific navies.⁵⁹ This approach would provide significant opportunity for military, cultural, and diplomatic exchanges on multiple levels producing the foundation for resolution of current and emergent geopolitical issues.

The Chinese have a deep respect and understanding of history, tradition, and culture. A majority of those scholars who study China agree that Chinese history and culture are formative criteria for Chinese strategic thought and behavior.⁶⁰ Subsequently, it is important to understand that Chinese tradition encourages its leaders to use violence, but more importantly to use it intelligently.⁶¹ Understanding this thought process is vital in analyzing China's efforts in regards to self-defense, reunification efforts towards Taiwan, and finally with respect to its international maritime disputes.

Finally, it is inevitable that China will continue to develop a modern, tailored, blue water capable Navy. This "new" type of blue water navy will be a hybrid of what

traditional naval doctrine dictates “blue water” navies should be. This naval force will be capable of challenging other blue water navies in limited engagements while trading space for time in the effort to attrite an opposing fleet. In the near term, the Chinese Navy will not be concerned with carrier based offensive power projection, but will seek to create a force capable of exploiting perceived US weaknesses both militarily and socially. China will undoubtedly continue to shape its maritime domain both as a layered defense in depth and as an economic asset. Thus, the Chinese government has no choice but to continue to devote resources to support its economy, but also to those naval forces most capable of protecting them.

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